

## MONTANA LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIVISION

## PERFORMANCE AUDIT

## Childhood Immunization Program

## Department of Public Health and Human Services

MAY 2014

13P-07

REPORT SUMMARY

Montana is currently and historically ranked among the lowest states for the immunization coverage rate for children 19-35 months old. Montana's young children could be better protected against vaccine preventable diseases by aligning state immunization requirements with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations, monitoring preschool immunization activity, improving verification and reporting of immunization records for schools, and providing more statutory guidance for the use of the state's immunization registry.

**Context**

The Montana Immunization Program is part of the Communicable Disease Control and Prevention Bureau within the Public Health and Safety Division of the Department of Public Health and Human Services (department). Most of its \$3 million annual budget is funded from federal sources. The Immunization Program has 10 FTE and affects in some way every child in every county of the state through the immunizations they and their contemporaries receive. Montana has a population of nearly 61,000 children under the age of 5. There are an additional 11,700 kindergartners and more than 66,000 elementary school attendees that are most directly affected by state immunization requirements.

Historically, Montana has ranked either last-or among the lowest-of the states in immunization coverage for 19-35 month old children.

In Montana, there are lists of age-appropriate immunizations that generally all children must receive prior to attending a Montana child care, preschool, and school located in state law and administrative rule. This audit focused on determining if the department effectively enforces child care facility, preschool, and elementary school compliance with immunization requirements.

**Results**

Audit work found that Montana's existing immunization requirements for various facilities do not align with current standards of care for immunizations to protect against vaccine preventable diseases.

We also found no monitoring of preschool immunization requirement compliance by the department, except for preschools that are run in combination with a licensed or registered child care.

Audit work identified that while the department does monitor child care facility compliance with immunization requirements, improvements could be made to better ensure children in these settings are protected against vaccine preventable diseases. These include following up with children reported as noncompliant with requirements and changing the selection process of child care facilities for assessment.

While the department annually collects data from schools regarding the immunization status of their students, we found improvements could be made such as more consistent compilation and verification of

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data submitted by the schools to better protect elementary school attendees.

This audit also focused on the efficient and effective use of Montana's Immunization Registry (imMTrax), which is designed to make immunization requirement tracking and related activities more efficient and effective through centralized data storage and access. We identified several issues affecting the use of imMTrax, including a lack of statutory guidance regarding the sharing of information within the system, and the need for improved controls to ensure data within the system is accurate and reliable.

Recommendation Concurrence	
Concur	9
Partially Concur	1
Do Not Concur	0
Source: Agency audit response included in final report.	

For a complete copy of the report (13P-07) or for further information, contact the Legislative Audit Division at 406-444-3122; e-mail to [lad@mt.gov](mailto:lad@mt.gov); or check the web site at <http://leg.mt.gov/audit>  
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